



23rd May | Pentecost Sunday

A new Christian Community of love, joy and peace.

Main Point:

At Pentecost the Christian Community became enveloped by the Spirit of God, as he alighted upon each one, filling them with power and grace. As the new community begun to fulfil their calling, their message of God's love, joy and peace spread throughout the world. We continue to walk in this same empowerment, and with the same message of love, joy and peace in our community.

Intro |

We gather today, to celebrate the giving of the promised Holy Spirit, by Jesus, to the apostles at the first Pentecost, and the birth of the Church on the same day, so to us the Church, happy birthday!

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, as we the Church, celebrate Pentecost, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love.

Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

In today's Gospel from St John, we have the last conversations of Jesus with his disciples.

Jesus pauses on several occasions in his instructions, to tell them of the gift of the Holy Spirit which will follow after his departure from them.

They will have a future to face, without him being amongst among them, but the Spirit will guide them.

The Holy Spirit will be the ongoing presence of Jesus to his disciples of all ages.

What a great assurance we have! Today's two passages from St John's gospel, wonderfully explain purpose of God's gift of the Holy Spirit.

In John 15:26, Jesus tells his disciples, that's us, of a future gift: an Advocate or, as the Greek indicates the Paraclete that is someone who will stand by the disciples in times of difficulty and trial, defending, guiding and instructing them. Jesus's mission was to make the loving Father known.

This task is now about to come to an end, but the Father, will enter human history once again, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, inspiring the followers of Jesus to continue the mission of Jesus.

The Advocate will come forth from the Father into the lives of the disciples and will witness to Jesus, just as the disciples will be the witnesses to the Jesus whom they have come to know so well.

They now have experience and knowledge they can tell to others, who haven't had that privilege of being with Jesus.

Our reading from Acts 2, superbly demonstrates this!

How did this sudden change come over the Apostles?

- At our Lord's crucifixion, all but one fled!
- They had been full of doubts and fears when Jesus was arrested, now they became strong and bold!
- Now they are ready and eager to preach the gospel, to proclaim the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Now they take on the religious authorities, with the truth, in love and humility!

We read from Acts 2 that in Jerusalem, at that time were people who had come from many countries for the religious celebrations.

Attracted by 'the sound of a mighty wind' they began to gather around the Apostles. They were amazed to hear the Apostles speaking the languages of the various nationalities present.

St Peter, with the other Apostles at his side, then preached powerfully, declaring that Jesus was the Saviour of the world promised by the prophets of old. The effects of this preaching were astonishing.

After St Peter's great sermon many came to him eagerly and asked: *'What shall we do?'*

He replied: *'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.'*

Three thousand were baptised that day. The Acts of the Apostles tells how day by day the numbers of the Christians grew.

This amazing success was due to the fact that the Holy Spirit promised by Christ had come down upon his followers to remain with them always.

This Holy Spirit is a mystery far beyond the grasp of the human mind, but the Bible tells us much about the Spirit, a divine breath that gives life to the world and wisdom to the minds of men and women.

A good reminder to us in our Christian journey with others is this *"no matter how well the disciples came to know Jesus, they will not be able to perform their mission to the world alone.*

During his time with the disciples, Jesus was not able to reveal all the wonders of God during his lifetime among us.

It would have been too much for one period or one set of human beings to cope with.

It is the advocate, the Spirit of Truth, sent by Jesus from the Father, that will accompany the Church through the whole of history, as John (16:12-13) says, guiding us towards "the complete truth".

At times, in our life's journey, we may wonder whether these promises are true, but, take heart, today's celebration reminds us of the richness of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It should fill us with courage and encourage us to respond to those unsolicited acts of faith, love and hope which rise up within us.

They are the evidence of the Spirit within us, leading us forward into the wholeness of ourselves as we realise our dreams.

God made us, and God loves us, however sinful we may sometimes prove to be.

God has saved us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and fills us with life, abundant life, through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

May I finish today's message, with this.....

We have this life giving gift to the church of the Holy Spirit in us, and that:

- Jesus sets up his community of disciples with the breathing of the Holy Spirit, as a people of love, joy and peace.
- That peace of Christ is in the world because his community is in the world.
- That peace as the essence of the Old & New Testament blessings, is embodied in the gatherings of human beings that embrace it.
- Peace means that the commandment of Christian love is being met.
- We are sent out to carry the peace of the resurrection to all humankind – that peace between God and man that comes from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- and finally, with some words from MP 219, a song by Graham Kendrick written in 1986, remember that.....

“He that is in us, is greater than he who is in the world!”

Amen

Discussion Questions

1. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost impacts Christians in many different ways. How does the Pentecost event impact you?
2. The outpouring of the Spirit should make a meaningful and important impact in our faith and be expressed in our daily lives. How does the Holy Spirit's make himself known in your life?
3. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the comforter, the advocate, the Spirit of truth, is there a specific role the Holy Spirit has played in your life that stands out?
4. Knowing the Holy Spirit dwells within us allows us to enjoy a peace which the world cannot receive, nor can the world experience it. How is the peace which the Spirit brings expressed himself in your life?
5. The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential in our prayer life – mainly because prayer is a spiritual activity. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your prayer life?

April Prayer Devotional

This week in our prayer devotional we will delve into what is often called Spirit-led Prayer. Every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in their heart, yet it takes patience and obedience to involve the Spirit in our prayer life.

